I love him, I love
him not...

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I love him, I love him not...

By RainyDayGirl

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Chapter 1

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story)

12/03/08 - Maths

Dear Diary

Today a new guy arrived! I'm so excited, he's really cute. And he's been put into all of my classes. Score one for the geeky girls. The look on Emma Hawton's face was classic. He spent the whole day with me, asking me all sorts of questions and...well, he's really awesome. I hope he gets to stay longer than the last new person. Jess was really nice as well. It was such a shock when her parents made her move again. She hasn't written to me, wherever she is. I suppose that shouldn't be a shock but I was really hoping we'd stay

friends. Whoops! Better do that work, miss will kill me if I don't finish it again. Bye x

"Oh, Belinda! Nice t-shirt. Where'd you get it, rubbish tip?"

The raucous laughter this caused lasted longer than normal but stopped abruptly when Andrew walked in. As soon as all six foot two inches of him walked in, the girls fell into awed silence. He was extremely handsome, even more so than Keith, the most popular boy in school. His brown hair was a little long and shaggy, but it accented his muscular face perfectly, half covering his dark brown eyes.

"Bel, are you coming or what?" he called out, his deep voice sending shivers down her spine. "You said you'd help me with this English and I still don't understand it."

"Um, sure," Belinda said, her blush blending into her autumn red hair. It was a pretty colour, dark but not quite brown. It was like someone had taken Lindsay Lohan's hair and transplanted it onto her head. Her green eyes were over-bright today, shining with happiness as she walked with Andrew. He was like a

teen God, even in the way he moved. Graceful but not odd.

Belinda was so wrapped up in Andrew she walked smack into Keith. She hadn't even realised she'd been walking for the most part but she must have been. He had definitely been standing still. She stood up from where she had fallen and blushed again. Why couldn't she do anything right?

"Sorry, I wasn't looking where I was going," she mumbled, scrambling around for her books.

"No problem," Keith replied, his voice even deeper next to her squeak. "Belinda, right? Here."

He had half of her books in his hand and was studying one. She was shocked that he had the nerve to read it in front of her! She spluttered indignantly as she snatched the book back.

"Hey! There's such a thing as privacy you know!"

"In your Maths book," he replied, deadpan. "Come on, I just wanted to see yesterday's homework - I didn't do it."

Furious, Belinda tried to storm off but walked straight into Andrew this time. He looked mildly confused for a minute, as though he didn't know what was going on. Then he smiled at Belinda and all she could think was 'whoa'. Something had to be wrong with the universe if this super cute guy was smiling like that at her. She felt a tingle of worry tease her spine before she dismissed it, following Andrew the rest of the way to the library.

Chapter 2

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 2

Dear Diary

That Keith is SO full of himself! Who does he think he is? Yeah, okay, he's cute. Stupid blue-eyed, blond hair babe. So freaking what? He shouldn't just read my personal stuff. It was kind of hot the way he helped me pick up my stuff though...no. He is NOT getting away with that. -Who does he think he is?- I just realised I already wrote that. God, there must be something wrong with me. Ack, Andrew's trying to read over my shoulder! Bye x

As Belinda came out through the library doors, she felt someone's eyes latch onto her. She shivered once

before spinning slowly around to see who was there. His blue eyes held her for a moment before he looked away, red blossoming over his cheek bones. She was held in place as though he was still staring at her but she could tell that he was failing to meet her gaze.

"What do you want, Keith?" Belinda said, her voice ringing clearly, shocking her more than him.

"I-" Keith seemed to be having trouble talking, his Adam's apple bobbing as he swallowed repeatedly. He tried again, his voice a little cracked, "I came to apologise for earlier. You were right, I shouldn't have read you're book. I know I shouldn't have but..."

"But what?" Belinda said, half furious, half amused, but totally curious. "You couldn't help it? And since when do you forget to do your homework? You're really smart, you've never missed a deadline and you don't cheat. And that homework was due in yesterday."

"You didn't honestly think I was looking at your homework, did you?" Keith asked incredulously. "Come on, why the hell would I forget to do the homework?"

"B-but you s-said-"

He waved passively, as though brushing aside her concerns. It made her angry.

"Just what do you want?" She cried, her eyes filling with angry tears. She hated him for making her cry. Hated him. "I didn't do anything to you! Why are you bothering me?"

Keith hesitated for a moment, as though wondering what he could and should tell her. And that made Belinda's mind flash through several possibilities before settling on the most rational. She saw a red haze settle over everything before she turned to him coldly.

"You're talking to me because you have to, aren't you," she said coolly, giving nothing away. Keith looked relieved, nodding vigorously. She understood!

"Yeah, I do! Listen-"

"Well you can tell Emma I'm not playing along," She said in that same icy-calm tone. "She can go jump off a cliff if she thinks that just because the hottest guy in school pretends to be my friend she can get to me."

Keith looked startled before his expression contorted. It took her a moment to realise he was trying not to laugh. How dare he, she thought angrily before she turned and stalked in the other direction, intent on getting away from him. She couldn't believe this. He was laughing at her, just like the rest of them. She had been right and she hated that it had worked. It had gotten to her, like nothing else could.

"Belinda, wait," Keith said, catching up and grasping her arm gently. She refused to turn, refused to look at him. He sighed and planted himself between her and the exit. "Belinda, come on. Honestly, I just want to talk to you. I know I said I had to talk to you, but I think we got our signals crossed or something. I just meant it was like a compulsion. I really feel like I have to talk to you."

Belinda gawped. She couldn't help it! He was talking as though he liked her. But that couldn't be right. He was the most popular guy in school, what could he possibly want with her? She took a deep breath before detaching his hand from her arm. She could

feel the way her hand shook and she saw the surprise that flashed across his face as he felt it too.

"Thanks. Really, thank you. But I don't like being followed around. Maybe next time you can talk to me because you want to, not because you have to."

Belinda left, leaving Keith to stare after her. She had to be the first girl he had met who didn't giggle and flirt. He had known she would be difficult to talk to but he had had no idea that she would point blank refuse to listen. He let out another long sigh before retreating through the school, his mind now firmly on what he could do about Andrew.

Chapter 3

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 3

Dear Diary

Keith was so weird yesterday. I shouldn't be thinking about it but I can't help it. He was so...sweet. Yeah, it was probably an act and Emma's probably laughing her ass off at this. But I wish he'd come talk to me anyway. He seemed so sincere. I know, laughable. But

"Belinda Godfrey, would you be so kind as to read the next paragraph?"

Belinda cursed silently before looking at her book with almost open panic. She didn't have a clue where they were. She looked down blushing before mumbling that she couldn't.

"Speak up Miss Godfrey. I can't hear you like that."

"I said I don't know where we are. Sorry."

"That's what I thought. Pay more attention to the lesson and stop writing in whatever it is you are."

Belinda sat down, the blush deepening. She knew that Mrs Pagin didn't want to embarrass her. She honestly wanted her to pay attention and learn but Belinda couldn't help feeling ashamed and angry. She'd already read the material and Mrs Pagin knew that.

Belinda glanced sideways at Andrew and caught him watching her carefully. She grinned, trying to let him know she was okay but then her eyes slid past him to another pair of eyes that were watching her intently. The blue eyes caught her off guard again and she blushed even deeper before jerking her head and staring straight down at her book. But she couldn't see the words. They kept blurring as she slid out of focus, thinking.

Why was Keith staring at her? What did he want? She glanced again, trying not to get caught. Maybe he

thought she was an idiot for not paying attention. Yeah, that was it, she thought, calm again. And she managed to look at him again, raising a quizzical eyebrow. He gave her the satisfaction of him turning away first, looking a little confused. She looked again at Andrew in time to watch him look quickly away from Keith, his beautiful eyes narrow.

Belinda barely heard the instructions from Mrs Pagin. She knew she was meant to be doing work. She knew it and yet...her mind was whizzing. Was Andrew jealous? Of her looking at Keith? She felt a wash of ecstasy before she turned, grinning like a fool, toward her work sheets. She loved the idea that Andrew was jealous, even though he had no reason to be. Maybe that's why it's so sweet, she thought to herself dazedly.

Keith's eyes flashed again at Andrew, the solid blue electrifying the air. He had to do something. He could see the dopey look on Belinda's face and he rolled his eyes. Loners were so easy to impress. Still, he knew he couldn't let Andrew...well. He looked away again, trying to appear disinterested. She would have to

take it however she wanted but he had to make her think he was interested in her. And he had to admit that she was intriguing him. Why was she so intent on not falling for him? It was insane to think that she didn't want to talk to him. He knew he was good looking and he wasn't above using it to get her attention. So why wasn't it working, he thought. His gaze flicked over her burgundy hair and fastened onto those sparking green eyes.

The blue of his eyes brought Belinda back to Earth. He grounded her, all the fluffy airheaded thoughts running from her like water from a faucet. She could see the rings of blue in his eyes and she felt like she was drowning in their depths. I've never been a great swimmer, she thought distractedly before trying to concentrate on her work. It took so much to pull herself away from the sea his eyes had become. She was breathing heavily and she thought she could feel a film of sweat cover her face. Weird. She wanted to run out of the room, anything to escape his stare.

She couldn't think straight, her head several steps behind her. Which was why when she looked around

she was already out of the classroom. She was looking in the bathroom mirror, her eyes wild and her hair loose around her. She looked mad, even as she tried to calm herself enough to take the walk of shame that would bring her back to her classroom. Before she made it into the hall though, she felt herself gag, barely managing to fling herself into a toilet stall before she vomited.

"Belinda?"

The sickly sweet voice reached her and she groaned, her head spinning more vigorously than she thought possible. She would give anything to be imagining that voice. Please let me be imagining that voice, she thought desperately, her eyes growing wide and wild once more.

"You'd better come out Bellikins," came Emma's voice again, a hard edge clinging to it. "Everybody's so worried. At least Mrs Pagin is."

Belinda was out of the stall before she realised it, her face green and pale. She saw Emma blanch before running from the room. Belinda smiled grimly, wondering how far she would run before she

stopped. But Belinda could hear the sound of Emma, hysterical and the soothing voice of...no, he couldn't! Why was he here?

"Belinda?" Keith called smoothly, his velvety voice freezing her where she stood. "Can I come in Belinda? Are you alright?"

As his voice came closer, Belinda looked around desperately, wishing Andrew were with her. Andrew always made her feel calm, made her free to speak how she wanted. She stared at Keith as he came in, something like desperation making her seem even more ill. He gasped and caught her as she fell forward, the world spinning around her.

"I-I'm okay," she whispered, trying to push him back. The last thing she needed was Emma to walk in on this, making her own stupid assumptions. He seemed to know that's what she was worried about. She felt his chuckle vibrate through her and he swung her up, holding her gently.

"Emma's gone to tell Mrs Pagin what's wrong with you," he said, his eyes twinkling again. "She's not going to do anything, don't worry. You scared me for

a second there. I thought maybe you saw something you didn't like."

And then Belinda fainted. Keith felt the sudden deadened weight and saw her head loll back. He sighed. He had been worried but he figured that Andrew must have done his thing and now...he would need to sort out this before he got dragged in any further, he decided grimly. Soon...

Chapter 4

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 4

Dear Diary

Sorry about the rude cut off last time. But so much happened...I can't believe it. I didn't know that Keith knew what to do when girls fainted. He must have been good at it though - everybody keeps staring at me. He's so...wow. He was a bit like a prince when he swooped in and literally swept me off my feet. Oh god. He's coming this way. Bye x

"Hey Belinda," Keith said casually, slinging himself into the seat beside her. She looked at him rigidly, trying not to let him know she was happy to see him. She didn't want to feel like this. Plus, he was sitting in

Andrew's seat. Andrew, who could be coming any second, expecting to sit with her. "Listen, can I borrow your time?"

"What?" she said, distracted. She wanted to talk to him but she wanted to be on her own when Andrew got here. The inner torment must have shown on her face because he spoke quickly, putting her out of her misery.

"Look, I just need a little help with my maths. Maybe some other time but still. Please?"

Belinda felt her breath catch. Was he...he couldn't be serious. He was asking for help in maths. That he didn't need. He was lying, outright and it thrilled her a little that he was coming up with excuses to see her. She smiled once, in a way she prayed was dazzling. Not promising or agreeing to anything. But giving him something to go on, she hoped. She wasn't sure that she could say no to Keith.

"Maybe," she said slowly, her eyes glinting playfully. "But what do you need help with?"

"I don't know yet," he said, a smile lighting up his gorgeous face. "Maybe I need to double check certain parts but I don't want to tell you until you agree."

"Don't you mean 'unless'," she said dizzily, licking her dry lips. "You don't know I'll say I want to 'help' you yet."

"Are you saying you won't?" Keith said, looking worried. "Because, you know, you're the smartest person in our class. And you can't leave a bleeding heart alone, can you? And I'm bleeding here," he whispered, leaning forward conspiratorially. His closeness sent a raw shiver down her and she heard herself whimper, her eyes pleading with him nakedly.

Keith pulled away suddenly, abruptly. He looked up to see Andrew sweeping into the room, eyes livid. Belinda looked as though she was surfacing from a dream - a good one. He saw the way she looked at him before her eyes became hooded. Mission accomplished, he thought with brittle humour. He didn't know what was wrong with him. He needed

her to want him if he was going to get Andrew but...he had never felt so cheap and wrong.

"Bel, hey," Andrew said with a calm that belied the livid light in his eyes. "Something up, Keith? Anything I can help with?"

"Not unless you can convince Belinda to help me," Keith replied, his own voice cool as icicles. "Because she's the one I want."

Belinda's breath caught again before she looked up at him. It looked like there was a kind of resolve in her eyes that could swing either way with her but he looked at them with unwavering innocence. She had to believe him or he couldn't get her to spend time away from Andrew.

"No, Andrew doesn't have to say anything," she said quickly, her eyes flashing around the room. "I'll help. Here, let me write down my house number and you can call me and arrange it. Okay?"

Belinda felt like something was going wrong. She had been in a happy world, joy spreading through her and now...she felt like she stood at the very edge of a

cliff with the two boys on either side: one of them pulling her to safety, the other pulling her over the edge and into a terrifying fall.

Keith looked at her with a bouncy joy that made her forget that she was worried. He left, promising to call her that night and she smiled. Maybe she could have Keith as a friend...or more. Who cared what Emma said? And Andrew looked like he didn't know what had hit him. Maybe she would finally have two guys fighting over her...

Chapter 5

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 5

Dear Diary

So, Keith called yesterday. He wants me to go over this weekend. When his parents and sister aren't there. Hell. I didn't know he HAD a sister! But I'm not sure I want to be alone with him. He's...sometimes I think he's hiding something important. Something I need to know. I woke up last night and I thought I saw him at my window. But when I looked nobody was there. And I'm scared that he's going to tell me. I've got to go. Bye x

Belinda stood alone on the balcony leading from her room. It was truly a breath taking view, putting her

worries to ease. She was sick again so she wasn't going in to school, a small amount of peace in her ever raging storm of a mind. She leaned her head against the cool wood of her railing. She couldn't stand very well and her head spun every time she tried. She wished her mum didn't have to work. She hated being alone at the best of times.

But you're always alone, a voice whispered in the depths of her mind. You know Keith doesn't want you. He's just messing with you. And when Andrew gets sick of you leaving him alone, you'll be like you're meant to be. Alone.

Belinda began sobbing, awful scared noises that made her feel even more terrified. She knew that Keith was hiding something, was probably in on something with Emma and it scared her that she didn't care. The feeling was hysterical, her body shaking as she clung to the rails. She needed somebody there, somebody to calm her mind, get rid of the gut wrenching feeling that she didn't have anybody.

Her hand reached for the phone, wanting her mum to fix this broken feeling. But instead she found herself dialling Keith's number. She needed to speak to him, to hear him. She wanted his soothing words, even if they were fake. Her sobs grew calmer as she waited...and waited. When the answer machine picked up Belinda was back to her most hysterical. She knew she left a message, something desperate but she couldn't help it.

After she hung up again she looked up at her clock and the fear rolled over anew. It was five to two - school would let out in an hour. And then it could be any length of time before he got home and heard the message. She curled into a ball at the front door, her head whirling in pain. She needed to think, needed a calm presence to fix her. Needed...

Keith came through his door, worried. Neither Belinda nor Andrew had been at school. He hadn't thought Andrew would move so soon, trapping her but...no, before he jumped to outrageous conclusions, he would call her house, see if she was okay. That was how he say the message light blinking slowly. He

looked curiously at it before pressing. Belinda's voice filled the room and he relaxed briefly, before he heard what she was saying. She sounded...scared. Terrified. So he reset the message to listen again.

"Keith, I need you to call back. Please, I need you to. I'm on my own, I-I-please!!!" He flinched at the raw sob. "Keith, I don't want to be alone, please, call. Or come round, please I n-need you. I don't know what to do. Please."

Keith was out of the door before the message ended. He had never heard anyone sound so scared. She had begged him, probably wanting him to pick up, impossible as it was. A whole hour had passed, and anything could have happened since then. Andrew could have gone to her house, pretending he was ill, tricking her. His mouth set into a line as his car pulled into her drive. He thought he could hear crying as he approached the door.

The door flung wide open, making Belinda jump. Her head lifted to meet Keith's eyes, the worry that creased his brow easing slightly as she tried to stand. And fell, when her legs couldn't hold her. Even as she

cried out he caught her and she was burying herself into his arms sobbing openly in relief. She had felt so lonely in the last hour...she never wanted to feel like that again, never. As he held her she felt the sobs subside and the headache push past the dizzy relief.

"Keith," she whispered before the pain eclipsed and she fainted. When she came to, Keith was sitting next to her bed, his fair hair fluffy. She rolled, her head finally free from the pain. Her hand reached almost absentmindedly for Keith and he jerked awake. His hand caught hers and he closed his eyes as he pressed it to his cheek.

"God Belinda, are you okay?" he said, his voice hoarse. "Do you know how much you scared me? Never do that again, okay?"

Belinda nodded mutely and then she closed her eyes, thinking back. She had called him, desperate for a friend. For him. She looked at him, her eyes filling with tears and gratitude. And then caught her breath as he leaned towards her, foreheads touching. And then he was kissing her, soft and gentle.

Chapter 6

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 6

Dear Diary

Keith kissed me today. It was only on the forehead, which is so confusing but it was nice. And then my mum came home and he had to leave, but he came. I needed him and he came and saved me. Maybe...maybe he does want to spend time with me, the me that nobody else sees. He's the only person I know who's ever seen me like this. And I don't mean in my pyjamas. I mean, vulnerable, scared and needy. And he didn't leave. I think...I think I love him. And God knows what Emma would do if she knew. But I don't care and I want to sleep and...dream. Bye x

When Saturday came by and Belinda hadn't been to school, Keith wondered if she wouldn't come over. But she hadn't called to say otherwise...and he knew now that he had her hooked. He just wished he could lead her on properly without feeling guilty. He'd never led anyone on before so he should have expected the guilt. He had expected the guilt. But he hadn't expected to feel so uneasy about her coming to his house.

His gaze flashed around the room, for maybe the hundredth time before settling on the clock. She should be there any minute and then...his gaze flickered to the pile of math books at his feet. He knew he shouldn't feel it but he hated those stupid books. He wanted to get rid of them and take Belinda up to his room. The sooner he had her, the sooner he could leave her and get rid of this guilt.

As Belinda stood in front of the door she hesitated. She hadn't bothered bringing her books (she was sure he would have his) but she felt suddenly, maddeningly, uneasy. Maybe he didn't want her there now that he had been to her house. Maybe he wished

he hadn't invited her but didn't want to seem rude. She gave a panicky look around before slamming her finger into the doorbell. She would deal with it, she told herself grimly before he opened the door.

She took him in: the sight, the smell, the feeling. She felt so safe when she saw him and she knew she had a stupid grin stuck across her face. Strangely, he looked away as though he was in turmoil.

"Keith, are you-"

"I'm fine," he said quickly, returning to his easy self. But Belinda couldn't stifle the prickling feeling in the pit of her stomach. He led her through the house to his living room, books scattered on the table. Unopened. She felt the knot in her stomach constrict with...desire. She wanted him. Goddammit, she wanted him with an urgency that left her breathless.

"Keith," she said softly, as he tried to find something they could do. "I know you don't need my help with maths. Hell, I don't know anyone who needs less help. So-"

He cut her off, his thumb across her lips. She looked at him, a look of yearning filling her soft features. He parted them, gently pulling her forward so that they could only stare into each others eyes. It felt so right to her, the weight of his hand on her hip, pulling her ever closer, his other hand, calloused yet soft, stroking her cheek. As the seconds became endless, her eyes fluttered open, searching his for answers. She hadn't known how desperately she needed answers but she couldn't help but search.

"Keith..." she began as he leaned his forehead against her own. She could see the cloud of lies in his eyes now, see that he was hiding something. "What aren't you telling me? There's...something, I don't know what but you haven't told me something. Please," she murmured, her lips tingling from his nearness. If he was going to tell her she hoped he would be quick, so she could kiss him.

"Belinda," he said, a bare whisper, full of feeling...regret. her eyes went wide as they took in the tone and then he was pulling back. She could feel the disappointment etched on her face and then he

was away from her. She tried to grasp his hand as he pulled fully back but he evaded her touch, as if it burned him.

"You're right. I'm not telling you everything. And...I have to be honest. What's happening now...it's not real. I shouldn't have lied but I needed to get you alone. I can't let you hang out with Andrew any more."

"Alone," she whispered, the anguish rising. He lied. He didn't want her. He never had. The thought alone was enough to destroy her. That's why he wouldn't kiss her. Not because she was ill, or he was nervous or whatever else she may have thought. No, he didn't love her back. "Oh, God."

"Belinda, hear me out, please. The thing is, Andrew isn't what you think he is. He's...not human. I know how that sounds. Believe me, I know. But you have to believe me. And I need you to believe me so that I can help you get away from him."

"This isn't funny, Keith," Belinda said, her voice regaining it's cold quality. Any feeling she had toward him was gone, she told herself. She just

wished it were true. "If you want me to be alone, fine. I'll send Andrew on his way, shall I? Be the loner I'm meant to be, huh? For God's sake, who do you think you are?"

"Belinda, come on. Are you telling me you never noticed something different about him? Please, he's just messing with you."

"Like you did you mean," she whispered, her eyes flashing. "And he's been the best friend to me, while you've been lying through your teeth since we properly met. Or are you telling me you haven't?"

"Yeah. Newsflash. I don't lie. But wonder-boy Andrew certainly has been."

Belinda gawped at Keith incredulously. Andrew, lie? Why would he? He had been nothing but nice to her, he could tell her anything. Keith had plenty of reason to lie: he was friends with Emma, queen of all bitches; he hung out in the 'popular' crowd, all whom were known for hating her; and he didn't know her. He had barely known she existed until the beginning of this year.

"You don't honestly think I would really lie to you, do you?"

"Why wouldn't you?" Belinda whispered back. But really, this seemed to be becoming a common occurrence. First Andrew had come along and made her into somebody liked simply by sitting with her and then, Keith started asking for help in maths! "And like I just said, you can! And you have."

"Not about anything important! I've always been honest about the big things."

"Only because you don't talk to me," Belinda retorted. "If you hung around with me, I'd be willing to bet you'd lie to me all the time. And how is lying about loving me unimportant?"

Keith had nothing to say. Why should he? She was right and he knew it. He leaned forward, thinking fast. How could he convince her he wasn't all bad? Even now she was backing away...

"Okay, so you've got me there. But please, why would I tell you something so outlandish? I could have just told you he was a druggie or something!"

"You haven't told me what you think he is!"

"He's a genie. He's waiting for you to make a wish so he can turn it against you. Genies always take something from the people they grant wishes to and usually it's a bargain for the soul. And you don't deserve that, nobody does."

"Shut up! I'm going. You're an ass and I hope that you and Emma get your chuckles from this."

"Emma's got nothing to do with this!" Keith cried, furious with her for thinking she did.

"I know she does! She's never liked me, but she can't pull the same thing on me twice. So she used you to do that. What did she offer you in return? A good shag? Well I hope you get what you want from her. God, I should never have listened to you!"

"Oh, yeah? And why's that? Because now you have to put up with this imaginary thing that you've got in your head?"

"Because if I hadn't listened to you I would never have loved you!"

Keith couldn't think of anything to say. Did she really just say she loved him? But she...and he...oh god. I've really messed this up, he thought frantically. And then she was sweeping out of the room, grabbing blindly at the front door, desperate for escape.

"Belinda, wait!"

Belinda crashed into someone on the doorstep and she saw a sweet young face through her tears. She sobbed an apology before running for the street. She had never felt so betrayed. How could he do this? She had honestly trusted him, loved him insanely. She had opened up to him, left nothing hidden. And he didn't want her. She wanted to hate him. She tried desperately to hate him.

Keith was cursing himself as he tried to go after her but he didn't know where she had gone. Turning back to his house, he saw his sister carrying her stuff into the house. She looked at him, rather seriously for an eight year old before he realised some of the things weren't hers.

"Who was that girl, Keith? She looked really unhappy. Did she get hurt?"

"Uh, sort of. Is this some of her stuff?" he said, trying to change the topic. "I should get these back to her."

"You're going to read that, aren't you," his sister said suspiciously. "You shouldn't. It's her diary. She wouldn't want you to read it."

"Diary?" Keith looked at the little book with renewed interest. "I might. I need to find her," he said defensively, trying to justify it. "This might have a place she goes. I need to find her," he repeated earnestly.

"Why don't you just see her at school?"

"How do you know I know her from school?" Keith was honestly surprised. He had talked a little about Belinda but she couldn't have connected them together.

"Your maths books."

Oh. Keith turned back to the little book in his hand, running his hand over the velvety cover. It was full of the secrets from Belinda's head and he felt the sudden overwhelming need to read it and see what she kept up there.

"You didn't answer my question," his sister said curiously.

"She's the one with the genie following her. I don't know what kind of deal he might try to make with her after...well, now that she's a little upset."

"Okay." Her eight year old innocence returned and she looked around the room before running upstairs.

Keith smiled and cracked the diary open and delved into the mind of Belinda Godfrey for the first time.

Chapter 7

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 7

Dear Diary

Emma lied. She said she was my friend. I hate her. I've never hated someone before. I never thought I could. But I know I hate her now. I swear I'm never going to talk to her again. Not that that's really a problem. But I wish she'd go off with that Keith guy and leave me alone. I don't think I want to be here any more. Mum's never home, it's not like she'd miss me. I want to...disappear. I think I'm going to pack. Bye x

Keith shuddered once at the desolate tones of the writing before flicking forward a few pages. He

vaguely remembered a time when Emma had befriended a strange girl from her English lit class. He had no idea what had happened but he remembered the rumours which started circulating about Belinda, something about her dad being a bum and her mum an alcoholic. He didn't know Emma had started them but he supposed that made sense. No wonder Belinda had looked so...betrayed. He read random extracts to himself, whenever a phrase caught his eye.

Jess called today. I never thought I'd have a real friend. But there she was, just on the other end of the line...

Emma was pulling that stupid stunt with the other cheerleaders again. I wish they'd pick someone new next year...

My mum caught me with the razor again today. I didn't even feel dizzy this time. I should try installing a new lock...

Keith kept reading, becoming absorbed in Belinda's every day life. When he came to the newer part of her diary, he was surprised by how often his name

came up. Especially when he least expected it. He wondered if she was still crying and the thought brought a lump up into his throat. Damn. He didn't feel this way, he couldn't. She was just a damsel in distress and he...

It's not really a problem anymore, is it? a voice whispered. She hates you, and if Andrew gets her, there's no girl to feel this way for. Why not just let Andrew take her? If you don't feel this way...

Keith hit the smooth wooden surface in front of him, seeing red. Nothing could compare to the pain of Belinda hating him. He jumped when the door opened, revealing his mother. He tried to smile but he knew it didn't come out right. Wishing he could run to her and tell her everything, he turned back to his desk.

"You're back early," he said conversationally. "I thought you wouldn't be coming back 'til Monday. What happened?"

"Your sister called me. What's this I hear about you having a girl over here? And a genie? Why on earth didn't you tell me? I could have helped."

"My problem," he muttered, wishing he had told her everything. Maybe in some alternate world, he had and Belinda had been kept at arms length. And then...maybe he had left her alone. Found a way of getting rid of Andrew without involving her. He hung his head, waiting for his mother to start in.

"Keith. You should have told me. Who was this girl, and how is she involved?"

Keith launched into the whole story, leaving nothing out. He knew to make full use of a situation, his mother needed to know everything. He finally finished and she looked at him carefully for several long minutes. Eventually she came back to life, her features animated with purpose.

"Okay, so here's what we need to do..."

Chapter 8

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 8

Belinda was cursing herself. She couldn't find her diary in her bag and she was sure she took it with her to Keith's. Keith, she thought with so much anguish that she almost began sobbing again. But she held back the hot tears that threatened to spill. She needed to find a safe place to sleep that was neither home nor Andrew's.

She knew it was stupid but Keith had seemed so serious that it scared her to think about being alone with him. So instead of running to Andrew like the rational part of her wanted to, she curled up by a tree, trying not to fall asleep. When she woke up to the burst of morning light, she knew that she was

safe. Irrational but she could feel the security around her as surely as if Keith was sitting beside her-

No! she thought, shattering her temporary safety. He's an ass. You don't feel safe with him because he's just a guy looking for a few kicks. And Emma's going to give them to him in a way you never could. And your diary will probably be all over school on Monday. Belinda thought she could even hear something tear. But she knew it was imaginary.

And suddenly she couldn't cry. She felt tired and betrayed but she didn't feel angry or sad. She just wanted to be wrapped up in a blanket with her mum soothing her from the heart ache. So she picked herself up and did the one thing that she wanted more than anything else in the world. Well, almost, a small voice murmured in the back of her head but she ignored it. She would not want him. She refused to.

Climbing up through her window, she received the next biggest shock of her life. Andrew was standing in the middle of her room, holding one of her teddy bears. She stood rigid before indignation took over.

She snatched Mr Frumples back, giving Andrew the iciest glare she knew how to.

"What the fuck are you doing in my room, Andrew?"

"Come on Bel, let's be rational."

"Rational?! You were in my room! When I wasn't! And just how did you get in here?" Belinda's voice became suspicious. "It was locked."

"The same way you did."

"Bullshit. You would have left it open. And you wouldn't have known I wasn't in here. Or were you hoping I was?"

Andrew looked away, seemingly searching for an answer. Belinda turned away in disgust.

"You know what? I think Keith was right. You are lying to me. Get out, now, and don't come back."

"Oh, Keith," Andrew scoffed, turning his name into an expletive. "Since when are you two such great friends? I'm sure he's just spreading shit because Emma wants to keep being queen bee and he's happy

for her to be! Why would they care what happens to you?"

"I-I don't know w-what you mean," Belinda stuttered, trying to stem the flow of tears. "But you obv-obviously don't care either! You're such a jerk."

"You don't get it, do you?! I care about you too much! I...I really like you Bel."

Wow, Belinda thought. Now that was one way of changing her mind. He was coming closer by the second, touching her face and hair. Was he going to kiss her? What if she couldn't kiss? I sort of blind terror took over her mind - a terror that never occurred when she was with Keith - and she felt relief flush through her as her mother called her downstairs.

"C-coming," Belinda called, rushing out of the room. "What's up?" she continued as she stopped at the front door.

"There's a young man here to see you," came the reply from the kitchen. "He said he'd wait for you at the door."

Curious, Belinda pulled the door open, peeking out into the front garden. She was shocked to see Keith standing there, aloof and sexy as ever in combats and a t-shirt. Her mouth dropped open and she slowly flushed red. She didn't want to see him right now. But then she spotted her diary in his hands. And the fear washed away as the anger came in.

"Did you read that?" she whispered, deadly ice creeping back into her voice. "I swear to god, if you read that, I'm gonna-"

"Gonna what Belinda?" Keith looked tired but steeled. She could tell from the way he said it. That bastard, she thought venomously. Even as she reached for the little purple book he pulled it back. She felt as he pulled up close to her, trying to tease her face to look up at him. She tried to jerk back but got caught by the door.

Jerk, she thought vehemently. He shut the door. Now I have to talk to him and he knows it.

"What the hell do you want from me, Keith? Seeing as you've already got my book, which you've evidently no intentions to return, what more could

you possibly take from me? A picture? To put next to the book and say, 'yep, this is her! What a sucker! She thought I would go out with something like her'? Well, why don't you and Emma just use the one she took last time? It's lasted this long and I don't think you'll find a more embarrassing one."

"Belinda, look," Keith said, apparently frustrated. "What can I do to convince you that I'm not trying to embarrass you in front of the entire school? Emma knows nothing of my interest in you."

"Fake interest," Belinda corrected, smiling manically. "Remember? You're not interested in something like me. And now you know all of my deepest, darkest secrets so you're unlikely to change your mind, right?"

"Belinda, please, I need to talk to you properly. I realise I kind of went the wrong way about sorting this out. And I didn't mean to hurt you. Honestly, I didn't know you were that deep in."

"Maybe you should have looked in the mirror then," Belinda replied, her voice taking on a hard edge she didn't know existed for her. "Because I'm pretty sure

you must have thought, once or twice right at the beginning of messing with me, why doesn't she go for the gorgeous blonde-hair blue-eye boy. And then you decided to go for a new tactic, right? Talking to me, making me realise that popular boys are human to. That bleed, if I recall correctly."

"I-"

"Oh, and then there's the coming when I called. You could have pretended you didn't get the call but you came over, like my knight. Except you knew that, right? I pretty much said it in the diary you read."

Keith didn't know what to do. He had been sure she would still feel something for him. In fact, he was sure she did, she was just refusing to admit it. So he did the only thing he could, given that she didn't want to let him talk. He looked at her sadly, trying to play his lost little boy looks for all he was worth. And he knew it was working. She was looking penitent as he reached for her hand.

"I don't know how to make it up to you. Honestly, I don't and I know you don't think I should bother trying because it won't work. But I'm begging you for

another chance. I will even get down on my knees and grovel, right here."

And he did. He pulled her hand to his lips, a soft gesture that left her own knees weak. He caught her up in his arms as she fell to him, and she knew she couldn't fight him any more. She didn't want to. She could feel his breath on her neck as he kissed her neck. She could feel the gasping sobs wrack her body again, making both of them shake.

And then he was kissing her lips so gently that she could barely feel it before she surrendered herself to him, losing herself in his heat. But she could already feel him pulling away, taking the heat with him. She looked into his eyes desperately, searching for the passion she hoped was hiding in him.

But all she saw was a careful wariness that set off an alarm bell in her head but she deliberately ignored it this time. She didn't care if she was being used, she didn't care if he didn't love her. She just needed somebody to walk her through the rough patch, bring her out the other side then decide whether he should leave her.

"So, want to come in? I'm afraid Andrew appeared this morning, a little uninvited but I think he'll stay in my room until I tell my mum he's here. If he still is I mean-"

And Keith was cutting off her sentence with two fingers before she could hope he would with his lips. She rose steadily to her feet before he could help her. She wanted to distance herself, prepare for the hurt this time. She doubted she would ever be ready. But she wanted him to see her as strong.

"So, come meet my mum properly? You're lucky, she's normally working. Maybe you can have breakfast with me."

Chapter 9

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 9

Belinda gripped the table as her mum served pancakes. Lots of pancakes. She's probably trying to make up for being at work all the time, part of her observed. The rest of her was panicking as she tried to make small talk with Keith and her mum. But she wasn't managing very well, she had to admit. In fact, Keith was doing much better.

"...really, she should have told me you were coming over. I'm happy she's inviting b- people over more now though."

"Mum, please," Belinda begged, trying to get away from the table and drag Keith upstairs. "I'm full now. What about you, Keith? Full up yet?"

"Hm? Oh, n-" he cut off at the dangerous glare Belinda gave him. "Yes, actually I am. Thank you though Mrs Godfrey."

"Call me Lizzie, sweetheart. And feel free to drop by anytime."

When they were finally alone in her room - yes Andrew had been long gone - she turned to him. She knew there was nothing real between them. It was an undeniable truth now and he was watching her like she was a dangerous panther that could claw him open. And she knew that she couldn't fight with him anymore. There was too much she didn't know, too much she couldn't reach out and touch. And so she sat on her bed and gestured at the chair across the room from her.

"Keith, we need to talk. About yesterday. I've decided-"

"Wait," Keith said, irrationally terrified. He didn't want her to talk about yesterday yet. He knew she knew something was up but he didn't want to give her even more reason to think it. Moving across to sit on the bed with her, he held his hand to her face. "I don't want to talk yet. Please, let me show you how sorry I am. I know you don't really believe me yet, but I want you to."

And then they were kissing again, his lips so smooth and persuasive as he pressed her back onto her bed. And she wanted him. His kisses became rougher as she pressed more desperately and she could feel his breath grow ragged as he swallowed after pulling back briefly. But she allowed him only that: a brief respite from her all consuming passion. And then he was with her again, moving against her as she rose to him.

And then, just as she felt his control breaking, she pulled back. It was maddening, leaving him on the brink of lust and desire but she couldn't take it further. She wanted to be with somebody who loved her truly and completely. But for now she would

settle with loving him enough for the both of them, holding what wasn't really there together with her desperation and passion. A passion she was only just discovering.

"Belinda," Keith began, his voice so hoarse that she could swear it wasn't an act. But then his eyes closed and he rolled away from her, breathing deeply and heavily. She wanted to lean over and touch him, once so he would come back to her but she knew she didn't deserve him. And he didn't want her, whatever his body told him.

"You were right," she said simply, staring at the ceiling. "Andrew's lying to me. I need to know how to fight him, how to stop him hurting the next person. But I don't want to kill him. I can't Keith," she said as he protested. "Nobody deserves to die."

"Do you love him?"

The question was almost inaudible and that gave Belinda an excuse to neglect answering it. She knew what her answer would be but she couldn't say it. not without breaking apart the facade that they held

between them. Keith cleared his throat and she looked at him for the first time in a while.

"What do you think we should do then?"

Belinda took a deep breath and let it out again. An idea was forming but she knew it sounded foolish. But then again, the whole concept sounded stupid to her; genies and magic and souls. And she didn't have one anyway so Andrew had chosen the wrong person.

"Couldn't we seal him? Stories come from somewhere, right? So can't we seal him in a-a lamp or something? Just something to keep him out of the way? Please," she whispered, holding herself over him, eyes wide and soft.

He couldn't help it. She was so beautiful like that he just...couldn't stop his hand from reaching up and pulling her down to him. But he felt the resistance as she waited for his answer. And he released her, sitting up, wishing she would hold still. But the minute he had let her go, she had sat cross legged and straight-backed.

"I think that'd be the best plan so far," he said slowly, as if this was a new idea. He saw her eyes narrow momentarily before relaxing into an easy smile. The same frighteningly beautiful smile that had caught him off guard that day in the canteen. The day he tricked her into saying yes. "He could probably get out if someone broke the seal but we can control that to. The only problem is...he won't come if he thinks it's a trap."

"So we have to fight, huh?" She smiled as though it was amusing and he wished he could reach into that head and take the answer from her. "Shouldn't take too much to convince him. I could tell him I took him seriously earlier. He'll think I really love him, seeing as..."

She cleared her throat, the faraway look vanishing as she realised what she was saying. Her eyes went soft again before she stood up. She dusted herself, pulling at her hair in an attempt to get rid of the just-got-out-of-bed look. He ran his fingers through it, trying to help but she stiffened at his touch. He held still

momentarily, wondering what was wrong but then she relaxed and fell back into his arms.

"Sorry, I haven't slept a lot. I kind of didn't come home last night. And now I'm snapping at you. Really," she said, turning to him the space between them crackling with potential energy. "Really, I'm sorry."

He took a deep breath and kissed her lightly, trying to pull her into an embrace she didn't want to leave. So she couldn't let him and it was killing her. He could feel when her heart went wildly out of control but he didn't know how to do the same with her head. And that's when he knew he didn't have her where he needed her.

Chapter 10

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 10

A long while later, Belinda was watching the stars from her balcony again. She knew Keith knew there was something wrong but she had managed to convince him she was trying to distance herself so she could pull this off better. And maybe it would be easier if he thought she was getting distant for another reason. Maybe it wouldn't be so hard this time, knowing that they weren't really together.

Her sad eyes turned up to the moon, she allowed herself a moment of pity. What if this was all one massive prank? How would Andrew feel knowing she had betrayed him, made fun of him? Not that it was really an option, given the consequences if he

was a genie. She couldn't afford that risk and she knew she had no dignity left. The only thing she wanted was for this to be over.

As she dressed for bed, she thought she saw something move. Instinctively turning, she pulled her shirt on and dove for the bed. Looking at the balcony, she saw Andrew standing beyond the door. Stifling a scream, she shrank further into the blankets. And then she remembered her part in the coming week. She needed him to believe that she believed him.

Standing shyly, she unlocked the door, smiling mischievously at him. As he stepped into her room, quiet as a cat, she mock punched him on the shoulder.

"Jerk, you scared the living daylights outta me. What're you doing here?"

Andrew seemed to be considering something, whether or not to keep playing the love sick boy card or to go for a new tactic. So Belinda leaned forward and kissed him softly. Just once, sweet and short and

then she pulled back and looked up nervously. As if she was scared he had changed his mind.

"D-does this mean you..." Andrew said, his eyes lighting up gently. He took a breath and continued, "you like me back? Does it?"

"What do you think?" She whispered back, letting him lean in and kiss her. She could feel the wrongness of kissing someone other than Keith but she buried that. She couldn't afford to think of Keith, not when she was with Andrew. It would break her again.

"But what about Keith?" It was like he could read her mind. She tried to look as hurt as she could, which wasn't difficult. He had hurt her, beyond what she could have ever pretended and she let that part, and that part only, show.

"He lied. I thought...I should have never listened to him. He started saying you weren't human! I couldn't believe him. I couldn't, not with the way I felt about you..."

She caught a triumphant smile on his face before he turned sympathetic. "How could I be inhuman? God, is he jealous or something?"

"Or something," Belinda agreed. She held onto him, not letting him see much of her face. She stepped back suddenly, looking at him with wide eyes, full of innocence. She had never known she could act. But now that her life possibly hung in the balance some buried fear was making her calm.

"Sorry for coming around so late. I wasn't sure if you'd still be awake but I was hoping...and I guess my prayers reached somebody. I love you, you know."

And Belinda was thrown out of her certainty. If he was human and she did this, she was condemning herself to a life alone. Worse than that, she would be embarrassing the poor boy in front of the whole school. But she tried to hold on to her conviction, with frightening tenacity. And then she bid him goodnight.

She didn't know what made her do it. She just knew that he needed to leave and she needed to think. And

he left, easy as anything, smiling dopily. But before she could think, she was on the bed, fast asleep.

Across town, Keith was pacing his room. What was he going to do? She obviously didn't trust him anymore. He could see it in her eyes when he looked carefully enough. But there had been - something - when they had kissed, there on her bed. Everything had been perfect, her small body, her lips, the way she fitted to him...but then, unfairly, she had pulled away. She had left him wanting more, almost as if she had abandoned him at sea in a boat with no paddles.

His teeth worried his bottom lip as he thought back to the way he had felt. He shouldn't have lost it like that, he knew. He should have been able to pull away leaving her wanting more. That's what he should have done but he had lost his objectivity, left it somewhere in her house when he had laid down with her. And he hadn't been grateful when she had pulled away, giving him an excuse. No, the word that had run through his head was 'tease'.

And he had almost demanded more, had almost lost his head for her. The only thing that stopped him was

the miniscule voice of reason, telling him he was there on a job. She was part of the job and nothing else. She should be nothing to him and he had to get his priorities straight. And now he had to avoid her like the plague so that Andrew wouldn't get suspicious. And he was imagining what it would be like once Andrew was gone.

She's not really yours, a snide voice said in his head. She never will be. Once you tell her the truth about what's going on, she's going to freak. And even if you don't tell her, someone else will when they find out. He ignored the voice but went to sleep restless.

Chapter 11

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 11

Walking to school with Andrew was...an experience. She had the satisfaction to see Emma's face as she walked in. Her jaw actually dropped. Belinda couldn't help letting a giggle escape and Andrew smiled down at her, blindingly. She knew she shouldn't feel so happy but she couldn't help it. Everything with Keith had been hushed and secret. Andrew was openly flaunting his new girlfriend, like he was proud.

Belinda went through the day, everything rushing by her. She felt so warm from Andrew's kindness, his...love. She knew it probably wasn't real but he was such a good actor. Keith had never done this,

never...whoa, whoa, hold up! a voice inside her screamed. Keith isn't the issue. Andrew is possibly a demon from another dimension and you're thinking about when he's going to take you on a real date!

Belinda couldn't ignore it, this stupid voice of reason. It grounded her and made her feel guilty for pretending. She knew she had to, knew it was the only reason Keith was talking to her but still. She smiled up at Andrew, knowing she looked troubled. She was trying so hard not to fall into the pattern, fall into loving him gently. But she was fighting a losing battle, her will already breaking under the sweet assurance of his arms.

And then Keith's eyes met her across the room. The flash of blue helped to steel her against the seductive brown that invited her in, stealing into her thoughts. Her eyes flashed away from Keith's quickly but she wondered if Andrew had noticed. She looked up at him and she thought, crap. Only, slightly less eloquently.

Andrew looked at Keith with what Belinda could only describe as murderous intent. She was afraid, not

only of Andrew but for Keith. Keith who only wanted to save her from...well, she wasn't quite sure what would happen but she knew Keith didn't want her to suffer it.

So Belinda did the only thing she could think of. She turned Andrew towards her and kissed him with an intensity that took over completely. She could feel the surprise and then the compliance. She could also feel the way he did this - detached and unfocused. She knew he wasn't really in this, wasn't totally interested. And she didn't care. If this distracted him from Keith, she would do it.

The rushing in her ears subsided, and she could hear the hushed silence in the canteen, disturbed only by the slamming of the door as someone left - in a hurry, evidently. She pulled back, looking shyly up at Andrew before the catcalls started. She could feel her face burning red but she forced herself to plaster a dopey grin across it, looking around unabashedly. The only person she couldn't find now was Keith.

Oh, part of her thought. Must've been him who ran out. Wonder why...Belinda tried to shake the thought,

giggling and flirting with Andrew again. She could think about it later or - better - talk to Keith about it. He would be able to tell her something she wanted to hear, true or not. The thought set off a new rosy glow in her cheeks and she held tight onto Andrew's hand.

Keith was furious with himself. No, he told himself. Calm down. You don't feel like killing Andrew. You know she doesn't want to, and now you know why. A detached part of him wondered if she felt the same thing with Andrew that he had felt with her. Dammit! No, you didn't feel anything, remember? You know she did because she trembles when you hold her, and that's what you needed.

And none of this was helping the insane urge to beat some sense into the girl. He knew she was supposed to make Andrew trust her, make him believe she was still under the spell he had already weaved. But he hated that she was such a great actress. If it's an act. Keith tried so hard not to smash the wall, not to put all of his power behind him and hit it, pretending it was Andrew.

All he could do was pray it was an act and talk to her later. If she wasn't with Andrew. The thought was all he needed to propel him into the next part of the plan, with vindictive ease as he thought of Andrew, trapped and helpless as Keith locked him in a dark and solitary place.

Chapter 12

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 12

Belinda shut the door behind her, having waved Andrew away. His kiss goodbye was still making her lips tingle. She wondered how she would get in touch with Keith without Andrew knowing. It would be difficult, for sure, she realised as she walked through the house towards the kitchen. And stopped, hearing someone moving around inside. She held still for a moment, trying to figure out who it was. If it was Andrew, she could pretend she hadn't heard it and be surprised if he came out to her. But if it was a burglar...she gulped, trying not to think of the various headlines that could come from the incident.

The thought made her giggle. She hadn't meant to but once she started, she couldn't stop. Wow, she thought as whoever it was froze on the other side of the door. Messing with a genie and then I get offed by a common burglar. What a way to go. The door swung open and Belinda just looked at Keith, giggling helplessly.

Once she was finally over the hysterics, Keith helped her to a chair. He was trying to tell her something but she couldn't hear it. Everything was oddly muffled, the way it felt when she went underwater. She looked at him, confused and he waved impatiently, almost like he was brushing something away. All of a sudden, sound crashed over her and she actually winced at the volume.

And then Keith was holding her face between his hands, those two electric blue seas making her drown in a whole new way. She whimpered as he pulled her to him, her body tingling in anticipation. He was going to kiss her, and she wasn't sure she wanted him to. Not because she didn't want him to kiss her, but because she wanted it too much. If she

got used to kissing him, she was afraid she wouldn't be able to let go of him when she needed to.

But he didn't seem to care, his lips pressing her softly into the counter. And she found herself kissing back, the desperation from yesterday overwhelming her. All the fear she had felt, all the distance she had tried to give herself...he tore it apart, leaving her feeling naked and trembling. The ice she was so desperately building melted at his touch, chilling her to the bone. And she couldn't pull away this time. So instead she tore at his defences too, trying desperately to, just this once, have him need her, like she needed him.

And Keith was clinging to her just as desperately. His mouth moved so roughly against hers that she couldn't breathe. His tongue slid across her lips and she gasped, tightening her hold on his hair. He pulled her so close that she could swear she could feel his heartbeat beneath hers. She couldn't let go, couldn't think enough, she couldn't breathe...

And suddenly she could. She had pulled away, so quickly that it left them both shocked and confused. He looked at her, dazed and a little hurt. She looked

back for a minute or so before turning away. She tried to breathe slower, but he was crushing her to his chest, his lips on her neck. She let herself feel it for a moment - a delicious, promising moment - before she pushed him away.

Keith stared at her, his breath coming quick and his pulse pounding in his veins. Why was she pushing him away? She must want him. He knew she did. And, inexplicably, he had felt the pull he always did with her. But she looked so serious, so...torn. She was trying to make some sort of decision and it was killing her. He didn't want that, he never wanted that. He reached for her, trying to comfort her and she brushed it away.

"Keith, I can't do this anymore. I can't keep pretending I don't know you don't love me," she continued, her eyes filling with tears. But she didn't stop. "I know you want to stop Andrew and I know you think trying to trick me is helping but...I can't anymore. I need someone who wants me and you're not them."

"But that's not..." Keith looked in her eyes. And finally realised why she was forever pulling away. Why she never let him hold her like he knew she wanted him to. And he knew, right then, that he needed to let her go, before she hated him. Before she couldn't stand to be near him without hating everything he did. Before, he thought, she went to Andrew.

"Okay. I'm so sorry, Belinda. I thought...I thought it would be easier if I- if we were together. I am sorry," he said, his blue eyes remorseful. She could see the regret in them, even more clear now than before. And she hated that it wasn't hurt at being rejected. But she couldn't take it back now.

"Then...thank you," she held out a hand solemnly, trying not to let him see how much she wanted to fling herself at him. And then...he was talking about what they had to do. What she, personally, needed to do. And she felt like he was holding her heart in a blender. He was so animated. So...relieved, she thought, stifling a mental sob. I mean nothing to him and he's glad he doesn't have to pretend anymore.

And I should be glad too...I will be glad. And then she let her hope go.

Chapter 13

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 13

Keith waited it out, talking to her, making plans. But he didn't want to sit here any more. She was so calm, so honest, so...beautiful. And she didn't want him. The knowledge sent a knife of pain searing through him. She didn't want him and she was ready to quit pretending she did. The only problem was that he wasn't. He wanted to keep being able to pull her close, no explanation, no excuses.

But that's not what you're here for, the snide voice whispered once more. It should be good that she doesn't want you anymore, shouldn't it? Or are you regretting messing this up? Because she doesn't seem to be, does she? He couldn't deny, nor suppress the

voice any longer. Mumbling his excuses, he left the house at lightning speed. Anything to escape those beautifully resolved eyes, eyes that didn't blame him. Eyes that, if he looked into them, left him aching in ways he didn't want to think about.

And he couldn't have her. Every time he looked at her he was reminded of that. It would probably be safer to give her up when this was over, just go back to his 'popular' crowd. But she's confident now. Someone's going to notice her. And when she gets together with- with Jack or someone, what are you going to say? 'Good for you'? 'Keep your hands off my girl'? When it happens, she's going to be happy with someone other than you. And there's nothing you can do.

Keith moaned and collapsed onto his bed. He hated that the voice in his head was right. When Andrew was gone, she would have no reason to talk to him. All of a sudden, he wished he had left it another week.

* * *

Belinda woke early the next morning, her eyes still rimmed red from crying. Looking at herself over the

bathroom sink, she could almost hear the snide remarks from Emma, the concerned look Andrew would give her, the brotherly concern of Keith. Don't think of him, she ordered herself, sighing before pottering around and getting the shower running. She tried to decide what to tell Andrew, flicking back and forth between ideas before finally settling on the most basic one: the truth.

Or, at least some of it. She couldn't tell the whole truth to Andrew, or he'd get suspicious. But she could tell him enough that he would well and truly believe she wasn't on Keith's side. The red rimmed eyes would give it authenticity, she decided grimly and hoped that she could keep this up for another week. She was already cracking and it wasn't even half way through the week.

The rap on the door took her completely by surprise. She jumped, staring at the clock. It couldn't be time to go, surely...but yes, it was. She leaped down the stairs, opening the door just as Andrew raised his hand to knock again. Aw, hell, she thought. I must look bad, if he's looking at me like that. She swallowed before

trying to smile. It didn't quite make it there before she flung herself into his arms, her head burrowing into his shoulder.

"Belinda, what happened?" Andrew exclaimed, his arms tight around her. "Is everything okay? Is your mum okay? Come on, talk to me!"

"I-I- oh Andrew, Keith came round yesterday," she began, her voice thick with tears and broken with sobbing. "It was horrible, he kept on saying how I had to believe him, how I couldn't go out with you anymore. Andrew, tell me he's lying, tell me you still love me."

After Andrew went through his reassurances, Belinda calmed down, her tears subsiding for the moment. She felt so anchored in his arms that she knew she could count on him, even if it was superficial. She wanted so badly to be held, she wanted to be loved. Even if it was the wrong person holding her.

At school, everyone was staring at her, gossiping about her red eyes. And she didn't care. She just needed to keep going, for four more days. But

meeting Keith's eyes in maths, she saw the ripple of alarm go through him before the anguish set in. And then the confusion, the flicker towards Andrew and then back. She looked away, tears welling up again before she could stop them.

When she looked up at Andrew though, he was glaring daggers at Keith. Daggers...with a sharp edge of smugness. She shivered before holding him more tightly. But he still wasn't looking away from Keith. Slowly, she pulled him around to look at her. And slowly he pulled her lips to his. It was a sweet kiss, but obvious. She knew why he'd done it, and she wished she could be in the moment.

But she kissed back, and smiled as he pulled away. She didn't care if it was wrong, if she would miss him once he was gone. She just wanted this to last a little bit longer.

Chapter 14

I love him, I love him not...(Ghost story) - Part 14 [FINAL INSTALLMENT]

And it did. She could feel the end drawing near and she couldn't help but throw herself into the role of the happy girlfriend. Well how could she? - it wasn't usually hers. But as Saturday slammed into her, she wanted more time. She almost called Keith and asked him to put it off but she didn't have the guts. And she didn't want him to think of her as weak. If she was strong, maybe he would call on her again.

Lying to Andrew was getting easier though. He came over without any questions now and when they went for a 'romantic moonlit walk', he didn't object in the slightest. She even thought he was going to ask her to go outside with him if she hadn't. It was so easy to get

talking about how lonely she was. And he asked her what she expected, like he'd rehearsed it. Who knew, maybe he had.

"What would you wish for if you had one wish, Bel?"

"I- I think I'd wish that I could get back at all the people who let me down. All the people who hurt me."

Looking up at him, she could see the wheels in his head turning, wondering how much to say. Eventually though, he said, "And what would you give for that?"

She hesitated a moment before ploughing on. "Anything."

"What if," he said casually. "What if I told you I could give you that. For a price. Only a small thing really. You wouldn't miss it in the slightest."

"What would I have to give?"

"Your essence. The thing that makes you tick. Would you really give anything?"

"Yes."

Suddenly, something was rustling around her, swirling her up and holding her. It held her facing him, frozen. He was reaching for her greedily, taking her head and reaching inside of her. It was like she could feel his fingers looking for her soul.

And then, miraculously, Keith was there, pushing Andrew back. Into the circle of sealing. Into the light that sprang up at Keith's incantations. And Belinda felt a sudden jab of fear. That something was about to go wrong. But she only felt it for a moment, only until Andrew's eyes caught her own and the world came crashing around her.

He was holding a hand out to her, his eyes wide with yearning. She felt something snap inside of her and she was reaching too. His hand was only a centimetre away, all the time reaching further. And then Keith's arms were around her, yanking her to safety. She struggled and sobbed, trying to break free.

Keith held onto her, his arms like a vice. She was straining to reach for Andrew, her head filled only with his face. Andrew was going away, his eyes round with hurt. She looked into them and they told

her she was betraying him. She knew she was, that she had led Keith here on purpose. It hurt to see the pain she had caused him and she wanted to hug him better, more...

"Belinda no!" Keith roared in her ear. He looked so scared, his arms pulling her close. His voice became ragged. "You didn't hurt him. Not really. He's going to kill you if you go anywhere near him."

Still, Belinda struggled, her arms reaching for that beautiful and blinding light. If she could just touch it, go with him...she had nothing to stay here for. Keith, wonderful, wonderful Keith would soon be ignoring her. And then she would have nothing again. She couldn't live with nothing anymore, not after finally having something for so long.

And suddenly Keith was in front of her, falling into that bright light. His blonde hair, his blue eyes, that shocked expression...it was something that would follow her to her grave. And then he was gone, sucked into the seal with Andrew. Belinda looked to the sky and screamed, long and loud. Just one scream

before the sobs and grief took control of her. And it sent everything she felt out into the abyss after them.

"Keith!!"

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Hope you liked the story (^.^)

I know I loved writing it and I would love for any feedback, so leave comments at the bottom

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About the Author

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